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THE UNVANQUISHABLE TCHAIKOVSKY

By CHARLES L. BUCHANAN

WE may accept as axiomatic four periods in the career of the artist's work: a heart-breaking disregard, a disproportionate adulation, a disproportionate disparagement, and, finally, the equilibrium of the ultimate estimate. The matter is almost as rhythmically proportioned as the tides: the balance of the antithetical emotions quite as inevitably adjusted. As a man's work is at one time or another provocative of passionate reciprocity, so will it sooner or later suffer a discrepant depreciation: glorify a reputation (for instance, Stevenson, Tennyson, and so on), and you prepare the forces of an eventual reaction amounting to a sort of animosity almost, a sort of pervert energy that gratifies itself in destruction. The idol-breaker has his place; but see that he comes to his task highly appointed and vouched for, lest he be merely one more of the innumerable band of shallow souled vulgarians who mistake a brittle glitter of cheap extravagance for the steady, sure glow of wisdom. All unconsciously, perhaps, the spurious dabbler in esthetic activities divines the quick recognitions obtainable from an exploitation of the sensational and ultra manifestation. The result is an intemperate dismissal of older manifestations, quite regardless of whether these older manifestations contain a degree of emotional impact and substantial significance unrivaled by the intricate strivings and false vehemence of a contemporary output. These extremes of opinion (perhaps one had better say prejudice or premeditated idiosyncrasy) are invalid as criticism. They have, in their time, directed their disparagements against most of the salient personalities of art, throwing their feeble derisions, their petty cynicisms and insinuations and cheap humors against the great spiritual forces of a Poe, a Byron, a Tennyson, a Wagner. There is a kind of very tragic incongruity, a something of crooked, satirical pathos in the ease with which these sterile revaluations would dispel the labors of a lifetime in a few whiffs of facile phraseology.

The matter is, I think, an acute revelation of the inherent falsity and shallowness of much sophisticated taste. I say sophisticated taste because I believe that this instability of judg-

ment is less a characteristic of the public than it is a characteristic—a dominant characteristic—of the isolated and precious minded few, the hierarchy, so to speak, who fabricate devious decisions and discriminations under the sacred slogan, Progress. Not that I would for a moment countenance and encourage a slipshod, slovenly, indiscriminate acceptance of everything in general. To allow oneself a kind of dead level impartiality of judgment and preference is to mistake tolerance for turpitude, to think that one is enjoying comprehensively when, to the contrary, one is merely not enjoying at all. The pleasure of art lies primarily in two things—namely, reverence and an instinctively fine sense of proportion. But there is an indefinable line where this instinctively fine sense leads off and a fictitious sense begins. The infallible sign of the authentic capacity for artistic appreciation is that it shall be able to estimate accurately and to enjoy in equitable proportion things widely, even antithetically dissimilar. One whose taste is, so to speak, to the manner born, does not dismiss this because it is not that; one appraises each individual manifestation for its own intrinsic worth, maintaining the highest idealisms and attitudes without a loss of a gracious comprehension of facile prettiness, gentle comforts, easy ecstasies.

Irrelevant as these remarks may at first sight appear, it is, nevertheless, necessary to emphasize them. A moment's rational consideration of the matter will reveal the self-evident truth that the true gist of cultural development tends in the direction of an ever heightening capacity for appreciation. We mark ourselves by the measure and efficiency of our enjoyments and comprehensions; we gather no credit to ourselves for what we fail to understand. Intemperate rejections may very properly be viewed with suspicion. Some special significance—some precious specific quality—attaches to all worthy artistic endeavor. It is our duty to perceive this in full proportion. We therefore know that we are on unassailable ground in rebuking those persons who have made the mistake of confusing disparagement with discrimination. In the present popular habit of patronizing or ignoring Tchaikovsky, we see this attitude of chronic inversion exhibiting itself in its poorest light. Despite the fact that a quarter of a century has not sufficed to dull the keen measure of the public's response to the unique appeal of his music, a certain unsubstantial view point remains antagonistically unreconciled to the fact of the man's indestructible significance. Perhaps the time has come when it may not be amiss to review certain aspects of the situation, and to attempt an informal summing up of saliences.

In his distinguished and finely felt essay on Burns, Robert Louis Stevenson emphasizes the worthlessness of all critical estimate that does not possess a kind of divine understanding of the inner texture, the infinitesimal subtleties of the artist's spiritual and emotional fibre. To judge adequately of the man's work we must be in sympathetic communication, so to speak, with the essential gist of the man's emotions as accumulated and projected from the thousand inner ecstasies, hidden hurts and crucial decisions of his experience. To understand him with our intelligences is not enough; we must understand him with our nervous system as well. We penetrate to the ultimate pith of his significance not through a conscious exercise of the critical faculty, but through a process, as it were, clairvoyant and indefinable, a process of mystic reciprocity. Perhaps this occult capacity for appreciation is more essential to an adequate understanding of Tchaikovsky than it is essential to an understanding of any other composer we have so far had. And the reason is, I think, because Tchaikovsky's music, to an extent greater than that of any other composer's music, is an individual and unique experience speaking. Just here we touch a salience. When a contemporary critic dismisses Tchaikovsky as a negligible proposition of about the status of Raff, he reveals a supreme and incredible ignorance of Tchaikovsky's dominant characteristic. The immeasurable difference that exists between Raff and Tchaikovsky (to say nothing of a thousand other differences) is the fact that one is a composer of nice, fluent, external sound, and the other is, precisely, one of the most protuberant and vehement psychologies that art has ever known. However one may wish to disassociate one's point of view from conventional sentimentality, the fact remains that the beginning and end of an inspired understanding of Tchaikovsky depends on the measure and quality of one's response and reaction to the interior meaning of his music. Wagner demands—to an even greater extent—this gift of impeccable reciprocity on our part; but whereas the dominant significance of a Wagner score is the exquisite hintings it offers us of a sexual and spiritual nature, the dominant significance of a Tchaikovsky score is a something more devious and recondite, a something that Tchaikovsky brought into music out of infinite inheritances of corruption and deterioration, a something cumulatively expressing itself through his music in a series of emotional stresses and explosions. To say as much (and no more) is merely to rewrite criticism.

The obscure and intricate extravagance of Tchaikovsky's psychology has been commented upon to considerable length.

But we may note a tendency toward a kind of dubious handling of the subject, as though it were a negative, regrettable something to be used as extenuating evidence. It is this attitude that must be confuted and obliterated once and for all. Tchaikovsky is the valuable something that he is precisely because of the idiosyncrasies imposed upon him by abnormal conjunctions and complexities. Eloquent to a degree that places him second only to Wagner as the supreme emotionalist of music, he represents the highest and sharpest manifestation of one of the two cardinal characteristics of the indispensable artist—namely, the propulsive and compelling workings of the unique impulse, the unique way of seeing and feeling and expressing. We may, if we choose, dismiss him as incompatible to our tastes; but we shall do this at our peril if we are not prepared to admit his preeminent personality, and to understand part, if not all, of the extraordinary, frightful significance of what his music is an expression of, of what it is hinting at, of what at times it is overwhelmingly articulating to those initiated by inauspicious collusions of malign circumstance into the vast, mute order of the spiritually maimed, the infirm of soul, the disease ridden and the terror haunted.

One need hardly record the obvious fact that a temperamental vehemence unassisted by a commensurate degree of craftsmanship is no more than a mere (although a very tragic) dissipation of energy. In Tchaikovsky's case we observe a coincidence quite without parallel in the history of art. To appreciate it we must understand the burden under which Tchaikovsky labored, a burden that would have proved insuperable to one of a less exalted integrity of intention. There can be not the slightest doubt that Tchaikovsky suffered from an extremity of morbid neurosis. This condition is, in its nature, fatally antagonistic to the exercise of the powers of concentration as evidenced in their various ramifications by the matter of continuity of thought, tenacity of purpose, premeditated discrimination, disciplined receptivity. The supreme salience in the case of Tchaikovsky is the superlative restrictions and obligations he imposed upon himself. That a man suffering from a quite diagnosable infirmity should have possessed and maintained the immaculate ardor, the exquisite precision, the invincible determination necessary to the attainment of his high purpose and difficult efforts is one of the outstanding features of the history of art. As a result (a miraculous cohesion, under the circumstances), the most vehement ecstasy that music has ever known (one does not say the most sheerly lovely) builded for itself out of infinite wanting, a chastity of intention

that scourged and lacerated all ulterior and facile purpose, and an impeccable spiritual morale (morale in the sense of determination), a degree of technical competence in its own peculiar way unrivalled. Let us stress this point—the sheer technical value of Tchaikovsky's achievements aside from their emotional values—let us bear it always in mind: the realization will eliminate the apologetic attitude from our sub-consciousness, and we shall be the better able to estimate Tchaikovsky as he deserves, affirmatively, energetically, sure of our enthusiasms.

It is a curious fact that although Tchaikovsky represents one of the most conspicuous personalities that art has ever exhibited, we know little more to-day of the secret interiors of his life than we knew a quarter of a century ago. True, the meticulous idealism of the artist stands clearly revealed in the book compiled by his brother, Modest Tchaikovsky, but the motivating influences of actual circumstance are but lightly touched upon, as though it were the intention of the biographer to evade the responsibility of exposing them. One may argue that we have no just concern with the private life of the artist: the fact remains that we cannot disassociate the art from the man, art representing (contrary to much popular opinion) a reflex of personal experiencing. So far as the external saliences of Tchaikovsky's life are concerned, there is nothing new for one to record. Under any circumstances, all that we need know of the concrete, physical facts of an artist's life may be contained within the confines of a few thousand words. It is the occult, inner gist to which we should penetrate (I repeat) if we would secure a vivid insight into the origins and latent implications of the work he has accomplished.

Briefly recapitulated, a sympathetic insight into Tchaikovsky's spiritual and emotional fibre reveals him as one of the great seekers, one of that strange band of alien souls who go through the world indefinitely troubled and warred against by the million hurts of over-susceptibility. In calling attention to these sorrow-troubled creatures one does not necessarily sentimentalize. In the light of modern investigation we see Tchaikovsky for a clearly marked case of psychasthenia, and in remarking this fact one is merely recording a scientific phenomenon. Sentimentality does not enter into the question in any degree whatsoever. It is true one is interested extraordinarily by the extravagant complexities of the case, but the interest is a legitimate one. There are not lacking hintings of secret documents to be disclosed at some future date, documents that will, we are informed, reveal the essential impulses and inhibitions of this curious, tragic figure.

By implication, the notion has circulated about to the effect that Tchaikovsky's distress was intensified by certain morbid perversities and idiosyncrasies of a sexual nature. Personally, I incline towards explanations other than those commonly accepted. The German point of view has tendered somewhat in the direction of an over-emphasis of the potentialities inherent in this phase of the matter. How far this matter might account for the extreme and notorious hysteria of Tchaikovsky, and how far this hysteria merged into insanity, no one can say definitively. In earlier years, I was led into factitious and extravagant intensifications of these aspects of Tchaikovsky, impelled and distracted by their emotional values as exploited in certain sensational appreciations. It is difficult for the imaginative consideration to maintain an equilibrium of judgment in the face of so sharp and so high pitched a temperament. I see no reason to modify my original estimate of the degree of Tchaikovsky's emotional vehemence, but I am inclined to alter my interpretation of its significance. It is essentially the reflex of a nature sensitised to an infinite degree, not the merely egotistical articulations of an incarnated wrangle and turmoil of manias and phobias. This point should be stressed.

It has been a little difficult for me, I confess, to abandon altogether my original conception of a nature obsessed and harrassed by obscure and vicious predilections. Read in this light, Tchaikovsky's music gathers a sinister suggestiveness about its unparalleled quality of lugubrious wittiness, black pathos and explosive irritability. Such is the point of view that serves as a basis for the fantastic interpretations of Huneker and the really remarkable appreciation of Runciman. But once one has subscribed to the theory of Tchaikovsky as a recondite degenerate, one is irresistibly led into an eventual intemperance of interpretation. In reporting a Nikisch concert at which the *Fifth Symphony* had been performed in a unique and enrapturing fashion, one of the most professional of our publications indorsed the reading as a revelation of a man's conflict with the destructive impulses of moral and mental deterioration. The point of view (I repeat) fascinates one with its subtle implications, and I would not altogether oppose it, for I take it as an accepted fact that Tchaikovsky represents in music an equivalent to those salient profiles in literature, the Wilde of *Reading Goal*, the Stringberg of a play such as *The Father*, the John Davison of that massive, sorrowful thing, *The City of Dreadful Night*. Say what one will, Tchaikovsky's unique contribution, as represented by his greatest work, the *Sixth Symphony*, remains his expression of that helpless, dreadful something

we so futilely call hypochondria, the impositions and persecutions of which are not to be identified or demonstrated by words. One knows all instinctively, or one knows nothing. This work expresses, cumulatively and for all time, the composite confidences of a miserable band of creatures maimed and obstructed as surely and as actually as are the maimed of body and limb. The restrictions imposed upon them bear no face value, their struggle is not gloriously obvious in the bright tussle of physical encounter. They go down to their awful defeats alone, they rise up to their secret victories unaided. Their agonies are thrice fearful because they are not of the actual world. Needing much, they are given little; the world has tolerance for them so long as they ask nothing of the world: it will put them aside in the emergencies of active realities. Love that should give to them bountifully, takes from them instead, or leaves them desolate; for their tragedy is the cruel, paradoxical fact that they see truly and sharply what their fellows see inaccurately, and feel with so keen and immaculate a fineness that a world, unacquainted with their altitudes of emotional estimate, fails to comprehend the authenticity of their ardors and ideals. They cry out and gesticulate; and a world that does not understand condemns them. Asked to do what they have no strength to do (to meet their environment upon equal terms), they ignominiously fail, and their failure is the ultimate agony of which the human soul is capable. Out of this ultimate agony came the *Sixth Symphony*. It is a personal expression, sheerly and absolutely. It is not an objective and a philosophical pessimism; it is one man's individual experience, an experience which, if it had been expressed through the medium of human speech, would have revealed its author as an abject creature crouching beneath the unappeasable winds and havocs of chronic hysteria.

I do not hesitate to emphasize this matter, for it is important that we should oppose the point of view (presented by no less clairvoyant a critic than Arthur Symonds) that would dismiss Tchaikovsky as a mere complainer, a sort of spoilt child ignobly whining over self-created torments and inevitable disillusion. This is an inaccurate interpretation. The essential significance of Tchaikovsky's individuality (as opposed, let us say, to the individuality of a Byron or a Wilde) is the unimpeachable integrity of his emotional significance and the superlative morality of his artistic idealisms. Contrary to much that may be suspected in the case of Wilde certainly, of Byron probably, we see Tchaikovsky not as a conscious dabbler in exquisite sophistications, or as a

vivid, romantic rebel picturesque and glamorous. We see him, instead, aching in the very integrity of his truthful, passionate wanting to be understood and to be comforted. His music is more often than not the sobbing of a frightened child. There could be no greater miscomprehension than a diagnosis that should impugn the validity of Tchaikovsky's distress; to even hint as much is to expose an absolute incapacity for inspired divinations. One may not altogether unjustifiably suspect the advocates and apologists of a Wilde or a Byron or a Verlaine of factitious and super-sophisticated subtleties of interpretation. The most tolerant morality, the most catholic sensibility can hardly avoid an instinctive distrust of these so flagrant, so premeditatedly defiant egoisms. One sees this type of artist, this kind of soul, partially, no doubt, but far from altogether, dominated by the great, mysterious forces of pre-natal influence. To a considerable extent, the destinies of these fantastic figures are their inheritances. It would be an incompetent consideration that should fail to take into account the vicious predilections actively inherent in Wilde's ancestry, or should underestimate the notorious record of violences and paroxysms presented by the mother of Byron. But even admitting as much, we see these men (and their kind) gradually grow into a sort of pleasurable concern with themselves, adulterating their griefs, embellishing their infirmities, engaging themselves in a not too real but quite enrapturing courtship with disastrous extremities and abnormal passions. Fascinating to our lighter, younger years, we grow gradually to see the artificiality of the attitude as paramount, the shimmer as tinsel, and the drama of a level with amateur theatricals.

Passionately antithetical to all this, we find Tchaikovsky. Let it be completely understood that whatever he is, whatever he expresses, be it for the better or for worse, he is compelled to express, is, as a matter of fact, literally persecuted into expressing. I wish I could comprehensively explain, as a matter of record, the conditions under which Tchaikovsky labored. At the very least, it is important for us to understand that the condition of neurotic idiosyncrasy, so predominantly a factor in the case, is incalculably and incomparably removed from the safe and comfortable confines of a mere selfish over-indulgence of whim. Quite to the contrary, it has nothing whatsoever to do with one's personal wishes in the matter; it is as beyond one's control as the tides. It is a kind of chronic panic, not panic in any figurative sense or poetic sense, but plain, outright, overmastering panic as one sees it horribly exhibited in actual catastrophe. To-day, as never before,

scientific psychology is concerning itself with the sinister phenomena of obscure nervous and psychical lesions. Much that was once dismissed or rebuked for outright obliquity, is now accepted, in its proper proportions, as a symptom of legitimate disease. We see Tchaikovsky's life as a thing blown about by the workings of this apparently irremediable infirmity of nervous deterioration, an infirmity that manifests itself in the peculiarly indescribable sensations of acute depression, chronic apprehension, dread of some particular catastrophe that eventually becomes a fixed idea in the sufferer's secret calculations, an ever increasing number of fears, intensified and complicated to an infinite degree. Such was the incalculable handicap imposed upon one of the greatest musicians the world has ever known—great, not in the sense of golden altitudes and profound calms, but great beyond expression in so far as he contributes a unique note to music in a manner technically impeccable.

I have gone to considerable lengths in this review of the temperamental saliences of Tchaikovsky for the reason that it is essential we should appreciate the differences existing between the romantic, picturesque melancholy of a Byron, the studied attitudes of a Wilde, the petulant depressions of a Chopin, and the sheer, awful unadorned misery out of which Tchaikovsky's music speaks in unprecedented accents and eloquences. Compared to the gay glitter of Wilde, the cynical, bold brilliancy of Byron, the languorous, ornate retrospections of Chopin (one of the half dozen greatest composers, but something of an emotional imposter as well), Tchaikovsky appears in the light of a beggar asking alms. Nothing could be more absurd than the bracketing together of these so utterly different kinds of emotional capacity. With the notable exception of the *Sixth Symphony*, Tchaikovsky's distinctive note is a pathetic, affectionate entreating, a note for which, with the possible exception of Schubert, there is no parallel in music. There is not elsewhere quite the same note of simple, passionate affection, an affection and a yearning that one can not call even sensuous, so essentially sad it is and heart-felt. The listener of delicate and sympathetic sensibilities will hear this note paramount in Tchaikovsky. It fills to overflowing the *Francesca da Rimini*, the *Violin Concerto*, the *Fourth Symphony*. Like in Schubert, it is a sort of beautiful complaining, a sort of sorry tenderness, but it adds to this a sharper note of commentary, of remonstrance, mordant, pithy, irreconcilable. It is the highest contribution music has made to the view-point (accepted in literature as a matter of course) that reacts, essentially, to the

pathos of life, the infinite hurt of life's demands and denials and disillusiones.

This attitude was bound to come, sooner or later, out of music, and in expressing it, Tchaikovsky supplied his particular art with the inevitable development of which, in his age, it was capable. Obviously, a Mozart or a Beethoven do not (in the nature of the case, could not) supply music with this very vehement, this wistful and very poignant quality of lamentation, for, aside from all question of temperament, their art was dominated by a tradition that subordinated a personal vehemence of expression to the dictates of proportion and a decorative symmetry. They were divinely delegated to the attainment of other tasks; one to design, for all time incomparably, delicate patterns of gay seriousness, follies recounted with a sort of tender regret, melancholy sighings in graceful protest against the hint and rumor of actual tears and calamities far away; the other to fill the medium of the symphony with its first notes of throbbing tussle and turmoil, elementally, nobly simple and lacking the subtler intensifications of sensuous and erotic significances. But it is futile to attempt to ignore the fact that these men fail to convey to our epoch any very acute degree of emotional impact. We enjoy them premeditatedly, so to speak: which is to say we enjoy them rather more through a process of conscious intellectual appreciation than as a result of spontaneous reciprocity. We must go to modernism for an expression of the sharper articulations of personal discomfort, as experienced in dissatisfaction with, regret of, and susceptibility to the tragic and, apparently, iniquitous accidents, inequalities and sufferings of mortal existence. In Schubert, Chopin, Wagner and Tchaikovsky we find, in varying degrees, a preoccupation with the poignant realities of mortal routine. They are the great emotionalists of music. Previous to their coming, a delicate nostalgia, a graceful melancholy had come into music with Mozart. Beethoven had supplied the note of what one might call an ethical ecstasy, a resoluteness and combativeness of spiritual forces. It remained for a later age to achieve the cry of the individual out of the bitter hurt of personal catastrophe. In Chopin and Wagner, this cry, miraculously welded into patterns decoratively beautiful, is of the senses rather than of the heart; in Schubert and Tchaikovsky this cry is of the heart rather than of the senses.

To sum up, we must put aside the totally erroneous interpretation that would depict Tchaikovsky as a sort of theatrical exploiter of superficial melancholies. One will seek in vain

throughout those four master works of Tchaikovsky wherein he has most tremendously and movingly registered his pathetically futile complaint against our sorry scheme of things—*Francesca*, *Manfred*, the *Fourth* and *Sixth Symphonies*—for a trace of affectation. The expression is, to the contrary, so frantically fraught with grief that the conventional emotional capacity, unacquainted with so passionate an attitude, is bewildered and, as it were, intimidated. But this must not be charged against Tchaikovsky. It is one of the curious characteristics of convention to accord a disproportionate amount of admiration to the optimistic attitude of mind. There may be a latent significance in this. We cannot know. But in so far as the purposes of art are concerned, there is no valid reason whatsoever why we should place a premium upon the fatuously serene Browning of *Pippa Passes*, and disparage the black, monumental agony of the Davison of *The City of Dreadful Night*, or, by the same token, assume that there is something or other to some degree more valuable about the repose of a Brahms or a Beethoven than there is about the explosive swirling vehemence of Tchaikovsky.

True, if this so extreme an emotional impulsiveness had proved inimical to the building of a substantial artistry, we should have had no Tchaikovsky. It is precisely because Tchaikovsky recognized so completely the fact that what ever else an artist is, he must first and foremost prove himself to be an artist, that he accomplished the difficult task of expressing emotions essentially inarticulate and incoherent, and of expressing them in a comprehensible and beautiful manner. Personally, I consider Tchaikovsky's record one of the most extraordinary in all art. That a man suffering from a disease, the essential result of which is the tendency towards a gradual deterioration and lowering of efficiency induced by an over-susceptibility to fatigue, should have developed within himself and maintained the degree of spiritual stamina necessary to the rigorous disciplining of his emotional impulses (especially in view of the fact that these impulses were obviously symptomatic of a psychological disturbance bordering upon insanity) is one of the supreme saliences of the history of art. It proves beyond doubt, once and for all, the bigness of this man's character. Misunderstood by transient consideration, unloved by Woman (as was inevitable in the case of so highly feminized a nature: Woman depreciating Man in proportion to the degree of development attained by Man's spiritual nature as opposed to the frank, crude aggressions of Man, the dominating male), an alien to the short-sighted theorists of his

own country—under such conditions Tchaikovsky lived a noble, lonely life and clung tenaciously to ideals none the less ultimate, exclusive and fine from the fact that they were troubled by great sorrows and distracting passions.

We shall seek elsewhere in vain for a higher proclamation of the artist's creed than that contained within the various correspondences of Tchaikovsky. The history of art shows no finer affirmations, no nobler attitudes. Beethoven faces the great inscrutableness of things with a more stalwart, redoubtable energy, but the difference is one of physique and temperament only. Brahms exhibits as lofty an exclusiveness, but less passionate a spiritual fineness. Wagner, of course, appears in the light of a mere propagandist. To any one interested in the problems of the artist's life, Tchaikovsky's letters to Mrs. von Meck are inestimable. Read appreciatively, they define with superlative distinction the essential tenets of the authentic artistic activity as opposed to the factitious and invertebrate activity of the dilettante. The genuine artist asserts, rebukes, revolts—and theorises never. In any great emotional desire to express there is no room for sophistications and shallow dialectics. Leave all self-conscious fabrications of formula to the little men of art—the essential trend pursues its way undeviatingly, sustained by some occult inner impulse that distinguishes between the legitimate development and the spurious affectation. For example, if Tchaikovsky had abandoned himself to the distracting and deleterious influences of the nationalism cult, the world would have lost one of the most original musicians of all time. Long after the name of Moussorgsky, for instance, has been forgotten by all but students of the history of music, the Tchaikovsky of the *Adagio Lamentoso* will be remembered. Whatever Gods there be—in Swinburnian phrase—will thus bestow their reward upon a man of vivid integrity, a musician whose particular problem it was to reconcile the apparently antithetical matters of a vehement neurotic impulse and a structural solidity and coherence.

One cannot believe that so tenacious a sincerity, so disciplined a technic, so passionate a wanting to be understood could have been a mere idle sport of the cosmical authorities, a combination effected only experimentally and to be disintegrated with the unmerciful passing of the years. One is confident of the contrary, secure in their estimate of the high invulnerableness of Tchaikovsky's technical efficiency. True, if this technical efficiency had been exercised in the expression of a sheer external glitter, if, as has been mistakenly assumed and proclaimed, Tchaikovsky's

music consisted of nothing more significant than picturesque illuminations and sensuous barbarities, no amount of mere adroitness in its manner could have preserved it. Obviously, its substance must contain some weightier quality than we had supposed. In his *Old Scores and New Readings*, Runciman, in reviewing a Tchaikovsky concert at which, amongst other compositions, the *Fourth Symphony* was played, observes that not once during the afternoon was the "human note heard." This makes curious reading today when the *Fourth Symphony* has become second in popularity only to the *Sixth*. This could not have been if this composition had lacked "the human note." No: once and for all we must put away the earlier tradition (fascinating, I grant you) of Tchaikovsky the victim of vicious impulses, of suicidal mania, of sensual savageries and (above all else) fictitious postures and intensifications. This is one phase of Tchaikovsky (the Tchaikovsky of the working-out section of the first movement of the *Sixth Symphony*, for example), but it is not the predominating phase. There are two other distinguishing characteristics—the note of grief at all discovered things, and the unexampled pitch of what one might call a sort of insistent, pungent eloquence, emphatic, resentful, beyond all else legitimate to an ultimate degree. It may be that it is this note of caustic commentary, of poignant expostulation—as one hears it in *Francesca*, *Manfred* and the *Sixth Symphony*—that supplies Tchaikovsky with his strongest claim upon a future consideration.

II.

Tchaikovsky represents a conclusive demonstration of the enormous fallacy of the question of nationalism in art. The idea persists, is apparently ineradicably fixed in the superficial consciousness, that art must express nationality, must convey an unmistakable indication of its national origin if it is to be accepted for a valid, vital art. An idea more enormously inaccurate has never been encountered. Art is an expression of an individual, not of an aggregate: we prize it in proportion to the degree with which it brings a new beauty into the world, a new, strange exquisiteness of seeing and feeling and expressing. The indubitable proof of this is the obvious fact that the art of the world that has come down to us with the accumulated approvals of the ages upon it, is art that is essentially abstract in its substance and universal in its appeal. There is practically no instance of a composition built out of national material that has been awarded the palm of enduring popularity. The great moments in music are the

expressions of varying kinds and degrees of ecstasies; and for the fitting expression of these exaltations, whether of lamentation or of rejoicing, they have created a language of their own. A man who would limit himself to the obvious restrictions of idiom, would, in the very nature of the case, stultify whatever capacity for emotional expressiveness he possessed.

The point must be emphasized. It has become something of a popular habit to disparage Tchaikovsky on the ground of his cosmopolitanism, and to throw him into competitive juxtaposition (to his disadvantage) with Moussorgsky. The inaccuracy is absurd. Call Moussorgsky a great original impulse, if you will, or an interesting primitive, or an epochal mystic—call him what you will; but do not fall into the error that fails to distinguish between the genius that hints tremendously, and the genius that accomplishes beautifully. We err greatly and very slovenly in neglecting to draw these distinctions. Why do we not content ourselves, for example, in accepting Whitman as a prophet or as a sort of dithyrambic essayist or as a sort of melodious sociologist! Why do we not content ourselves in accepting Moussorgsky as an eventful potentiality, a man who brought into music certain valuable harmonic indications, but who failed to cultivate his talent with sufficient assiduity! Tchaikovsky, to the contrary, will endure because he is, precisely, one of the greatest musicians, on the purely technical side, that music has ever known. An artist must be something more than an artist to be great, but he must be a craftsman even before all else. This overwhelmingly significant secret Tchaikovsky divined. His quintessence is contained in less than a dozen words as follows: In answering an insipid inquiry from someone of an obviously banal and conventionally sentimental cast of character, he said: "My ideals! My ideal is to become a good musician." One cannot imagine a foolish question answered at once more simply and more comprehensively.

If all art—music in particular—were the merely emotional and decorative matter some precious points of view would have it, the chief count that can be brought against Tchaikovsky would be eliminated. In other words, if one were to deny the predominant importance of the idea in music (as in relation to the matters of a sheer rhythm or a sheer decorativeness or a sheer mood), one could claim a place for Tchaikovsky in the front rank of the world's composers. We have heard Tchaikovsky spoken of as a "second-rate composer." The condescension is deplorable. Can we determine that a thing is "second-rate" if we have no other thing that is indubitably first-rate with which we may properly

compare it? For example, we may very properly compare Brahms with Beethoven, Strauss, to a certain extent, with Liszt or Wagner. The mould, so to speak, of the mind, and the technical means employed are obviously allied. But there is another quite different type of artist—a less weighty type, no doubt, but indispensable. One might almost dare say that the art impulse, pure and simple, is found at its keenest degree of activity in what one might call the lesser or subsidiary type of artist, as in distinction to the comprehensive type wherein we find the accumulations of preceeding tendencies arranged and employed in equitable distribution. It is for the individual to prefer the one type to the other if he chooses to do so: the equitable judgment will accept both types, each for its intrinsic qualifications. In the one class we find, for example, Beethoven, Brahms, Strauss and Wagner; in the other and by far the larger class, we may include Chopin, Franck, Grieg, Debussy and Tchaikovsky. In the sense of original impulses whether of a sheerly technical nature, or on the sensuous and emotional side, the importance of these men cannot be overestimated.

Tchaikovsky is of this latter group not by reason of any special quality of technical originality (as in the case of Chopin and Debussy), but by reason of what one might call a great originality of emotional point of view and manner of expression. This point should be emphasized. Tchaikovsky accepted an established medium of expression, and re-vitalized it and amplified it into the actualness of the something new. Both in his string quartets and his symphonies he supplied music with the spontaneous, vital, legitimate ramifications of which, in his age, these traditional forms were capable. There can be no doubt that he represents a kind and degree of development in the continuity of musical expansiveness that makes him the one indispensable symphonist since Beethoven. This does not for one moment mean that Tchaikovsky can be compared with Schubert or Brahms in the matter of substance: it means that neither Brahms nor Schubert present music with the unmistakable salience of Tchaikovsky both as a vehement propulsive force and as a recreator of conventional mediums of expression. The loss of the four symphonies of Brahms would not create an appreciable lapse in the history of music; the loss of the *Sixth Symphony* of Tchaikovsky would. No doubt, the substance of a Brahms symphony or a Schubert symphony is incomparably finer. No doubt, the music of these men will sound long after eight-tenths of Tchaikovsky has been forgotten. Well, it is questionable if Debussy contains the stay-

ing qualities of Strauss, and yet there can be no question which, of the two, is the more precious sensation, the more precious contribution. By the same token, the distinction must be made between the quality inherent in Brahms, and the something of unique insurgency inherent in Tchaikovsky. It must be unequivocally contended that Tchaikovsky stems direct from Mozart and Beethoven in the sense that expression and means are welded together with that indescribable something of inspired and miraculous inevitability that marks the perfect manner.

Tchaikovsky is of a royal company in his gift of balancing a profound technical facility with a beauty of expression. His music is alive from its first bar to its last. Obviously, the explanation of this is to be found in the almost unprecedented vividness and vitality of the part writing. The inner voices of a Tchaikovsky score are animate to a degree beyond any other example in music with the exception of Wagner. Read a Tchaikovsky score closely, and observe the remarkable assertiveness of the inner voices; observe the ease with which they progress, progress to so independent and untrammelled an extent that they seem to possess the salience of the dominant melodic line. "The greatest contrapuntalist since Bach," Huneker says of Brahms. "Brahms as a master of the management of notes stands with the highest," Runciman says in an estimate otherwise far from complimentary. Well, of what avail all this! Who cares? We are not interested in a mere academic exploitation of technical procedure. The all important question is: Do the notes and the counterpoint mean anything? (Of course, the estimate is ridiculous aside from this—the greatest contrapuntalist and the greatest master of the management of notes the world has so far seen is Richard Wagner.) But our present point is the matter of contrast in the effect of spontaneity produced by a Tchaikovsky score as opposed to a Brahms score.

After all, the end of art is the sum-total of the effect produced upon the collective mind. The matter of technical procedure is, in the last analysis, of no consequence. It is because Tchaikovsky is so essentially pre-occupied with saying something and with getting somewhere that his music exerts so powerful an effect upon the emotional attention. No composer says his say more directly: the fact that he combines this pithy, almost, one might say, caustic out-spokenness with an impeccable craftsmanship constitutes, from the purely technical standpoint, his dominant characteristic. It is one of the determining factors that supply his music with its peculiar appeal; one of the factors that will pre-

serve the finest pages of his music against the unmerciful passing of the years.

There can not be the slightest doubt that the conventional elaborations of what is invidiously called "classical" music have lost their appeal to modern ears. We no longer enjoy—if we ever did enjoy—fugue, canon and counterpoint for their own sake and quite aside from the question of their emotional expressiveness. Observe how deftly Tchaikovsky evades any semblance of premeditation in his exercises of these essentially academic contrivances. Instances of this—to choose at random—may be noted in the fugue from the first movement of the *First Suite*, the enormously eloquent use of the trombone in the last movement of the *Sixth Symphony*, and the ascending passage for the wood-wind in the first variation of the theme of the last movement of the *Third Suite*. Note, moreover, the ingratiating gracefulness of Tchaikovsky's counterpoint as exhibited, for example, in passages such as those in the last movement of the *Fourth Symphony* where the flute embellishes so exquisitely the theme of the Russian folk-song upon which the movement is founded. Again, note the apparent spontaneity of the passage in the second movement of this work where the flute weaves a pathetically beautiful counterpoint over the principal theme sung by the 'cellos. It may be observed that the effect is one of inevitability—precisely the effect that must be attained by the work of art that would exert a compelling influence upon our sensibilities. Three-fourths of the ineffable appeal of Tchaikovsky's music arises out of this knack of weaving together the subsidiary voices. The part-writing in the *Sixth Symphony* supplies in itself alone an unforgettable sensation, just as the part writing in the *Tristan Prelude* thrills us with its quality of irresistible progressiveness. To this may be added a merit that, I believe has never received its just due. I refer to Tchaikovsky's great harmonic gift, a unique gift, after a fashion, in so much as it entails hardly any aspect of innovation, depending almost exclusively upon an adroit manipulation of existing and quite elementary material.

Obviously, Tchaikovsky does not discover, as Chopin does, a new harmonic material. He cannot be credited with Wagner's sensuous magic, nor, like Debussy, does he attempt and achieve a miraculous reconciliation between hitherto unsuspected relationships of chords, creating a new beauty out of an inspired juxtaposition of sounds. The fact remains that out of material, essentially simple, Tchaikovsky achieves a degree of harmonic eloquence unparalleled in symphonic music. He is one of the

most poignant harmonists in all music. Through the exercise of some adroit and indescribable knack he can make an ordinary chord of the sixth take on a new expressiveness. Note that passage in the last movement of the *Fourth Symphony* where, in one of the variations on the Russian folk-song, the 'cellos descend through a succession of half-tones into the chord of the sixth in C major. No more wistfully, regretfully beautiful bars have ever been written; bars literally redolent with the heart-ache for the far-away. Turn, in the same movement, to that passage for wood-wind that follows immediately upon the giving out of the principal theme by the trombones. Study the acute, pathetic quality of these few bars, achieved by a dexterous finesse in the blending of the ascending figure in the clarinet with the harmonies given out by flutes and oboi. There is no sweeter, tenderer page than this in music. Mozart could not have exceeded it in grace, Schubert has nothing to show more truthfully, humanly sad. I would direct attention to a similar example of harmonic facility, to be found in the eighteenth bar of the second movement of the *Second String Quartet*. The effect is irresistible. Any one at all acquainted with the technical side of music will note the essential fundamentalness, so to speak, of Tchaikovsky's harmonies, and it is precisely this quality which supplies his music with the high degree of its tenacity of appeal. As a result of this, he presents us with a directness, forcibleness and structural solidity in his modulations for which we must needs go to Beethoven for our parallel. Note, in this connection, the modulation directly preceding the entrance of the love theme in the *Romeo and Juliet*; the modulation at the close of the working-out section of the *Fifth Symphony*, from the dominant seventh of F major to the original key of E minor; the passage on the bassoon, preceding the second theme of the first movement of the *Fourth Symphony*, wherein the keys of A and A flat are firmly related to each other through the medium of their respective dominant sevenths. These are salient instances out of hundreds that might be cited.

The thing to bear in mind throughout an analysis of the sheerly technical aspects of Tchaikovsky's music—the thing I wish to emphasize above all else—is the important fact that these great technical attainments are invariably part and parcel, so to speak, of the emotional eloquence. In other words, they are never an end in themselves; and as a result (I repeat) Tchaikovsky's music exhibits a unique amalgamation for which there is no parallel: on the one hand, a technical profundity of unsurpassable substance, on the other, a poise and finesse equalling Mozart's

in its kind of graceful buoyancy. True, Chopin and Wagner exhibit something of a similar miraculous equilibrium (observe, as one instance out of thousands that might be cited, the Chamade-like prettiness and sophisticated delicacy of the permutations and developments of the "hunt" theme in the opening of the second act of *Tristan*), but the unique feature of the extraordinary fusion consistently operative in Tchaikovsky's music is the effect it produces of a sort of doleful insouciance, thrice tragic by reason of the discrepancy. To those for whom this music has a personal significance, these melancholy brightnesses, these lugubrious exuberances and feeble flickerings, pathetically playful, aristocratically debonair, represent the very uttermost outer rim of grief. To the initiated few, this, so to speak, laughing tearfulness, this sorrowful badinage (in which there is both a sort of reticent, gentle pride and a sort of delicate, tender bravery) will ever remain the dominant and quite incomparable characteristic of this music.

As a result, partially, of this quality of consummate dexterity, Tchaikovsky has suffered a grave misrepresentation on the matter of form. In view of the fact that critics of considerable eminence have contributed to the circulation of this superficial inaccuracy, it may not come amiss to subject this question of form to a frank and fearless scrutiny. The fundamental fallacy of this question of form in general, and of its application to Tchaikovsky in particular, is the fact that we speak of form as though it were an absolute thing, when, in reality, it is not. In other words, we speak of form as though it were a fixed law inexpugnably permanent. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Form is not a something to be slavishly adhered to as though it were a crucial and determining criterion. Form is merely a means of communication between artist and public. In other words, form is not a virtue in itself; it is merely a means to an end.

Let us recognize this great, unescapable fact once and for all. Technical procedure is a matter of absolutely no concern whatsoever to a final summing-up of an artist's significance. Technical procedure is to the musician what a grammar or a dictionary is to the novelist and the poet. One could not err more egregiously than to demand that a musician writing in the year 1918, for example, should be ruled out of court for not having paralleled with meticulous precision the symphonic form as represented, let us say, by Mozart and Beethoven. The thing is intrinsically absurd. Hunkeler, a brilliant but not altogether a substantial mind, counts it a point against Tchaikovsky and, as an inevitable corollary, a point in favor of Brahms, that the former

works "loosely" within the symphonic form whereas the latter is a "master of form." In other words, Tchaikovsky amplifies, elongates and intensifies a conventional medium; whereas Brahms accepts a conventional medium, and leaves it very much as he finds it. It is, of course, obvious that Tchaikovsky's attitude is, of the two, by far the more valuable; and one need not hesitate to denounce as ridiculous the easy, fallacious habit of denying form to Tchaikovsky. After all, just precisely what is form? Obviously, form is balance, proportion, symmetry. It is a means of achieving a coherence that would be lacking if the artist simply threw his moods and experimentations out into the world in an utter disregard of law and order. It is a thing one feels; it is not necessarily demonstrable. To the contrary, the whole history of criticism has sought in vain to formulate it into criterions, to fix it in words universally demonstrable, applicable, comprehensible. It may, for all we can say to the contrary, be as fundamentally operative in Ornstein as it is in Beethoven. In sum, it is a thing the artist develops for himself out of a sort of semi-consciousness of divination.

To say that Tchaikovsky is not a formalist because the structure of his music does not undeviatingly correspond to the structure of Mozart or Beethoven, is equivalent in absurdity to the claim (if one can suppose so inaccurate a claim) that J. Francis Murphy is prosaic because he paints barns and hay-stacks, or that Degas is not a master of draftsmanship because he paints ballet-girls and race-horses. As a matter of fact, Tchaikovsky is, in his way, a supreme master of what one may call the structure of music: which is not to say "structure" in the sense that one would apply the word to Bach or Beethoven or Brahms. Furthermore, we may assert with every confidence that Tchaikovsky's exposition of his ideas exhibits a clarity and coherence of design for which there is no parallel in symphonic music. This statement will not be disputed if it is understood. It means, simply, that Tchaikovsky, primarily concerned in placing a statement before you, achieves an effect of appearing to dispense with the interminable circumlocutions and purely decorative manners of the older symphonists. It was inevitable that, sooner or later, the older attitudes should give way to a sharper, a more urgent, a more immediate articulation. To say as much implies no lack of reverence for these older attitudes—one merely means that they are no longer pertinent to the emotional stress of our age. To say that we have dispensed with the elaborate formalities of "classical" music does not for a moment mean that modern music

is not in the truest and best sense "classical." We speak of a "classical" style as though it were a something possessing an intrinsic quality peculiar to itself and, more especially, to its age. In reality, a classical quality is to art what that indefinable something of to-the-manner-bornness is to the individual. In a word, it is nothing more nor less than a supreme dignity of demeanor. We are likely to think of it as a something that happened fifty to a hundred years ago as in contrast to something that is happening in our own age and locality. As a matter of fact, all superior art is classical, but it is not necessarily classical in the same way. Tchaikovsky's use of the symphonic mould is as legitimate an intensification of its potentialities as is Wagner's intensification of the operatic medium. *Tristan* is no less a classic than *Figaro*, although the styles of the two are obviously incomparable, and, by the same token, the first movement of Tchaikovsky's *Fifth Symphony* or the last movement of the *Sixth* is no less formal than a Beethoven symphony, albeit the contents are utterly dissimilar.

The world thinks in ruts, and fallacy is ineradicable. Even Runciman, subtlest of Tchaikovsky's appreciators on the side of temperamental significance, errs in his estimate of Tchaikovsky the master-builder. It is a pardonable deficiency. We have so long endured beneath the yoke of the classical obsession that we are cowed into a subservience to the totally erroneous notion that an adherence to some form or another prevalent a hundred or, as the case may be, two hundred years ago, is an essential condition of artistic salvation. An idea is almost universally accepted to the effect that older methods made for a degree of clarity and precision far and away beyond the reach of modern methods. Of course, this is absurd. Precisely the reverse of this is the truth. We are absolutely wrong in placing a premium upon the methods of a Mozart or a Beethoven, as though these men had accomplished for all time a certain degree of adroitness and beautifulness of expression that cannot be excelled. To the contrary, as art, all art, has progressed, it has grown more simple, actual and comprehensible. One does not contend that its quality has improved (to the contrary, its quality has largely deteriorated); one merely contends that its appeal is more immediate, its methods more direct.

Frankly, let us ask ourselves just precisely how much meaning the opening of the Beethoven *Seventh Symphony* possesses for us of today. Let us ask ourselves, furthermore, whether the average listener, uninitiated into the mysteries of musical form, would

find the pith and gist of the organization of the first movement of this symphony as clearly indicated as is the pith and gist—the structural significance, in other words—of the first movement of Tchaikovsky's *Fifth Symphony*, the last movement of the *Sixth*, the last movement of the *Fourth*. There can be no doubt that Tchaikovsky's intentions are more clearly demonstrated than are Beethoven's. Compare, for example, the first movement of the Tchaikovsky *Violin Concerto* with the first movement of Brahms' *Violin Concerto*. I, for my part, find the latter absolutely lacking in consecutiveness of design; and I say this from out of an unbounded admiration of the lofty beauty of the substance of this music. A close scrutiny of Tchaikovsky's structure will reveal an impeccable appreciation of balance and proportion. True, the pattern, as in the case of Chopin, is new, and, therefore, it is compelled to formulate its own laws in its own way, and impose upon itself a self-created discipline. The result is a coherence that, for all its vivid, impassioned, overwhelming eloquence, remains fundamentally symmetrical. Instances of this remarkable welding together of a redundant emotional energy with a flawless pattern may be noted in the first movement of the *Fifth Symphony*, the last movement of the *Fourth*, the last movement of the *Sixth*. It will be observed how clearly Tchaikovsky indicates throughout all his music its various divisions and sub-divisions, building up his sections with the clear-cut, four-square compact definiteness of blocks. The effect, even in the use of subsidiary matter, is one of energetic assurance, of, so to speak, "getting somewhere;" and it is precisely this quality which gives to Tchaikovsky's music its high degree of tenacity of appeal.

What then, with all these high virtues in his favor, is the one deficiency that may be charged against our desire to rank Tchaikovsky with the very greatest? One thing and one thing only—the lack of the very highest, weightiest quality of that indefinable something one may call substance. Broadly speaking, there are three kinds of musical contents—melody, mood, idea. I have observed elsewhere that a musical idea corresponds to a literary idea, that, in other words, a sequence of notes such as, for example, the opening theme of the Brahms *Violin Concerto*, represents to music what a line such as, "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" represents to literature. One will easily observe a distinction between this kind of musical thought and the kind that is represented by mood or melody. The opening of the "Emperor" *Concerto* is an obvious example of musical idea as opposed to mood or melody. The opening of the Beethoven *Fifth Symphony* is an even more famous example.

If music were the mere matter of instinct and emotion some points of view claim it to be, we should have no use for idea in music. Obviously, music contains a large degree of that kind of tough fibre built out of intellectual premeditation we find in a Browning or a Meredith; and it is this quality that we shall not find in Tchaikovsky anymore than we shall find the ethical note of Arnold or Tennyson in the poetry of Heine or Byron. There is no conclusive evidence to the validity of the universal assumption that this note of breadth and bigness is a superior note, but the fact remains that the world has accepted it as such, and in agreement with such a criterion, we must recognize the preeminence of those musicians that have spoken largely and grandly, in distinction to those that have passionately protested, or sung merely beautifully, or wrought, out of devious occultisms, fantastic witcheries frail as gardenias and as evocative as the odor of violets and heliotrope. Judged by this standard, Tchaikovsky fails to rank with the greatest of the great; judged by any other standard, he remains one of the world's finest musicians; and he will survive misunderstanding and disparagement. It is true that there is hardly a single big idea to be found in all Tchaikovsky. At the moment, I can suggest no instance to the contrary, with the possible exception of the first theme of the *Fourth Symphony*, the last movement of the *Sixth* and, possibly, some parts of *Manfred*. One has only to turn to a page of Tchaikovsky from, let us say, the opening of the Brahms *Fourth Symphony* or the second movement of the Brahms *Second Symphony* to receive an emphatic indication of the incalculable difference that exists between the thin, lithe, rapier-like smart and snap of the one, the brooding, weightier, bulkier kind of utterance of the other.

But to admit as much as this is not, necessarily, to relax one whit of the tenacity of one's allegiance to Tchaikovsky. It is arguable whether the original impulse so intensely operative in Tchaikovsky is not of greater value as a contribution to the history of music than is the deeper intellectual premeditation and fuller musical substance of Brahms. It is questionable (I repeat) whether we might not better abandon the entire output to Brahms if this were the alternative to a destruction of the *Sixth Symphony* of Tchaikovsky. Beethoven, Schumann, Schubert supply us with anticipations of Brahms that would to a certain extent, compensate us for the loss of Brahms if we were compelled to do without him: the "Pathetic" is, to the contrary, a great, uniqueness of human expression; precisely, as a matter of fact, one of the two highest, sharpest, most acute exclamations that music has to offer us.

Moreover, we must balance the deficiency of Tchaikovsky from the side of a sheer bigness of expression with the incontrovertible fact that he is one of the greatest melodists the world has ever known. One cannot too strongly emphasize this fact. It is questionable whether Tchaikovsky does not stand close to Schubert as a melodist, in the sense of a simple, homely pathetic quality. Personally, I believe that this aspect of Tchaikovsky has not yet come into its own. For a peculiar something of pleading, wistful, tenderly mournful beauty, music has nothing to show that excels (I had almost said equals) the second theme of the *Violin Concerto*, the *Francesca* theme so plaintively sung on the clarinet, or the love theme in the *Romeo and Juliet*. Needlessly invidious as the distinction may appear, it is of interest to note the obvious fact that at least two of Tchaikovsky's melodies—the andante cantabile from the *First String Quartet*, and the horn passage from the second movement of the *Fifth Symphony*—have sung their way into the common consciousness, and are treasured. That the distinction is a treacherous one, I grant you: the fact remains that none of Tchaikovsky's contemporaries has accomplished as much.

III.

As one looks back over the matter from the standpoint of the situation as it exists today, one distinctly observes that the balance is all in favor of the case for the defense. Tchaikovsky has survived the crucial test of an unqualified emotional reaction on the part of the public. As in the case of Wagner, his popularity has extended beyond the reach of any suspicion of its validity. It has now become a logical and an inevitable reflex of his music's intrinsic qualifications. Obviously, we cannot dismiss Tchaikovsky as a mere voluble mouther of facile phrases, nor as a melodramatic masquerader. Supreme emphasis must be placed upon the almost frantic integrity of the man's intentions, and the keen, unique capacity of the man's intellectual organization.

To read his letters is to realize the awful hurt of a fine, complex, super-sensitive nature struggling in the meshes of a compulsion-neurosis with its accompanying disruptions, obsessions and phobias. Small wonder that he should have cried out over-loud at times! The wonder is that he should have been able to dominate himself so extraordinarily well! He was a reader and, in so far as his unstable nervous system would permit, a thinker; a man who, living always under the rainy, dolorous skies of a vicious unhappiness, yet sought to see and think with that large

universality of seeing and thinking which is, perhaps, the distinguishing mark of the classical manner.

When I think of the handicap imposed upon him by inheritance, I feel as though I should like to shield his memory as we shield a child from the brunt of life; I feel a kind of eager defence of him, a kind of irritation at the thought of so equitable, so stolid a temperament as Brahms competing with this frightened, unfortunate nature who was given on the one hand the great gift of musical expression, and on the other the hard bondage of a most sinister unhappiness.

Bear all this in mind, and then consider the passionate persistence with which Tchaikovsky, conscious always of his inferiority, and acutely antagonistic of fraud and affectation, labored to eliminate the negative and unworthy elements from his nature. It was a sublime struggle, a travail of soul-bearing. What an indictment of divine dispensation it would have been if so much turmoil and stress had gone to the making up of nothing more significant than a moment's amazement!

We are glad to believe to the contrary. Music here does not speak to us out of a great, cloudy calm or a great sunniness in a golden, genial voice as with Beethoven. Or, as with Brahms, in grave, obscure, judicial accents. It does not come to us with the four winds of the world blown about it, thundering its upward way over formidable and monstrous mountain-peaks as Wagner has taught it how to do in the *Ring*. It is music that is, at its greatest, dependent upon the degree and kind of interpretation imposed upon it. Miscomprehended, it fails of its effect. But, after all, is not all art seventh-tenths what we bring to it? We cannot expect that persons that are temperamentally unsusceptible to the vehement significances of Tchaikovsky's emotional exuberances will maintain any very keen degree of affection and admiration for Tchaikovsky's music. The academic temperament or the temperament nurtured on prim and prosaic seclusions will, no doubt, depreciate the stress and tumult of these unique expressions of over-excitability, of brain and nerve disease, altogether ignoring the fact that art is not necessarily limited to an expression of states of perfect health and happiness. This phase of the matter needs no further emphasis; it is a self-revealing proposition to people of emotional discernment. Our point, however, is aside from all question of idiosyncrasy and mutability of personal like or dislike. We are concerned merely in emphatic proclamations of the indubitable durability of Tchaikovsky as artist and musician.

The records, as we see them from the vantage ground of to-day, show that those critics erred enormously who estimated the staying qualities of Tchaikovsky from the sentimental standpoint alone. Tchaikovsky lives on his merits of a sheer fineness of material consummately manipulated. We could not spare that peculiar kind of passionate, expostulatory, pleading musical speech so characteristically his and his alone. Not even in Wagner—master musician of all time—do we find quite the same sort of thing that we encounter in, for example, the E major melody in the *Francesca*. Much of all we have loved falls victim to the passing of the years. Tchaikovsky, at his greatest, will not fail us, for at his greatest (as, for example, the middle section of *Romeo*, the working-out section of the *Fifth Symphony* the working-out of the *Sixth*, the *Adagio Lamentoso* and all of *Francesca*) he represents that combination of original impulse and impeccable craftsmanship which we accept as of transcendent and predestined origin and of the innermost texture of the miraculous stuff of Genius.